A SERMON

PREACHED before the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

Lord MAYOR

AND

COURT of ALDERMEN,

AT

GUILD-HALL-CHAPPEL,

July the 23th. 1682.

By *THOMAS PARGITER* D. D. Rector of *Greetworth* in *Northampton-shire.*

1 THES. 4. 6. *That no Man go beyond and Defraud his Brother in any matter, because that the Lord is the Avenger of all such.*

LONDON,

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA OXON.

TO THE

READER.

I *Suppose that which hath made ſeveral Worthy Perſons very Earneſt and Importunate for the Publication of this Sermon, is the exceeding great Honeſty of it, it being directly Levelled againſt all manner of* Fraudulent *and* Injurious Practices. *In it the great, but very much neglected Duty of* Doing no Harm *or* Wrong to one another, *is as throughly and fully Preſſed upon us, as it could poſſibly be in ſo ſhort a time as is allowed for a Sermon; and the hopes that it may do ſome good to-*

wards the making of Men more Just *and* Righteous *in their Dealings than generally they are, hath been the chief and prevailing Cause of the Printing of it: And surely the sending abroad of a Discourse upon this Duty of* not Wronging one another, *cannot be thought Unseasonable or Impertinent in such times as these, wherein the Hearts and the Wits of Men are so much set upon* doing Wrong.

A

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ON

I THESS. IV. 6.

That no man go beyond and Defraud his Brother in any matter, because that the Lord is the Avenger of all such.

THESE Words will afford us very good and fit Matter for a serious, useful, and practical Discourse; and that the ensuing Sermon upon them may be altogether such, I shall observe in them these two things.

1. A Duty. And,
2. The Enforcement of that Duty.

The Duty here enjoined us by St. *Paul*, is, that we muſt not go beyond and Defraud our Brethren in any matter. And this Duty the Apoſtle enforces upon us by ſuch a dreadful Argument, as may well terrifie and affright us all into a careful Performance of it; for he tells us, that if we do go beyond and Defraud our Brethren in any matter, the Lord will be the Avenger of us: God will not then ſuffer us to go Unpuniſhed, but will moſt ſurely Execute his Vengeance upon us.

There is ſome Controverſie among Expoſitors about the Duty of the Text, and they are not fully agreed what it is that St. *Paul* doth here enjoyn us, when he chargeth us not to go beyond and Defraud our Brethren in any matter. Some of the ancient Expoſitors, and a late Learned one of our own, do here very much contract and ſtraiten the general ſignification of the words ὑπερβαίνειν and πλεονεκτεῖν, which we tranſlate *go beyond* and *Defraud*, and in this place reſtrain and determine the ſence of them only to the matter of Uncleanneſſe, and think that that

which

which the Apoſtle here enjoins us, is, that we muſt not injure and wrong our Brethren in the matter of Uncleanneſs, either by Defiling their Bed, or by drawing them to Commit ſuch unnatural Filthineſſes with us, as are not to be named: And that which chiefly Induced them to make this Interpretation of the Words, is St. *Paul*'s ſpeaking againſt the Sin of Uncleanneſs, both before the Text, and alſo immediately after it. But notwithſtanding this, the generality of Ancient and Modern Expoſitors do not think fit thus to ſtraiten the ſignification of the Words, nor ſee reaſon enough to make ſuch a narrow and ſcanty Interpretation of the Text, as if it reſpected only the matter of Uncleanneſs: But they take the words in a larger and more general Sence, as they may be Applied to any Matter or Buſineſs whatſoever that we may have with one another, and ſo make the meaning of the Text to be, That we muſt not tranſgreſs and overpaſs the Bounds of Juſtice in our Dealings with one another, we muſt not go beyond and over-reach our Brethren in any matter; we muſt not Defraud and Circumvent others in any thing whatſoever; we muſt not any wayes

wrong them, nor in any kind be Injurious to them. And in this Sence ſurely the Words may well be underſtood, and we ſhall the rather believe that this is the right meaning of them, if we do but conſider that this Duty of not Wronging and Defrauding our Brethren, is a thing that St. *Paul* was very ſtrict and ſevere in Preſſing upon others, and in Practiſing himſelf: He chides the *Corinthians*, and Rebukes them ſharply for their Neglect of this Duty, and ſeems to upbraid them with a great deal of Indignation for their breach of it, 1 *Cor.* 6. 8. *Nay, you do wrong and Defraud, and that your Brethren.* Nay, in the foregoing Verſe of that Chapter, he Preſſes this Duty farther and with more ſtrictneſs upon them, than moſt men are now willing to hear of; for he is there ſo far from allowing them to do any injury to others, that he earneſtly perſwades them rather to take Wrong, rather to ſuffer themſelves to be Defrauded, rather to loſe ſomething of their own Right, than to go to Law with others upon every Treſpaſs and Offence. And to ſhew theſe *Corinthians* how rigid and ſtrict he himſelf had been in the Performance of this Duty, and how clear he had

had alwayes kept himſelf from unjuſt and diſhoneſt dealing with others, he ſolemnly Proteſts to them his own Innocency in this matter, 2 *Cor.* 7. 2. He there waſhes his Hands clean before them from the doing of any wrong, and lets them know that no unjuſt Gain had ever cleaved to his Fingers; *Recieve us,* (ſayes he) *we have wronged no man, we have Defrauded no Man.*

I ſhall take it for granted then, that the meaning of the Text is that which our own and moſt other Tranſlations ſpeak it to be, and that the Duty enjoined us here is to this effect; That we muſt not Encroach upon the Rights of our Brethren, nor Defraud them of their Subſtance, nor Injure them at all in any of their Poſſeſſions, but muſt ſuffer them to enjoy their own Goods in all quietneſs and ſecurity. We muſt not take Advantage of the Ignorance or Unwarineſs, the Unskilfulneſs or Credulity of others, to beguile them and do them wrong; we muſt not ſtretch our Wits and Inventions to hurt them, nor any wayes to over-reach and Circumvent them in our Dealings with them; we muſt not endeavour by any cunning Devices to take or Detain from them that which is their due; we muſt not uſe any ſubtil Arts

or

or Policies either to get or to keep from them that which is their own, and doth of Right belong to them; or in ſhort, We muſt not do any manner of Wrong to them, nor in any thing deal Injuriouſly with them. And that I may the more ſucceſſefully enforce upon you this Duty of not Wronging others, and the more effectually bring you all over to the Performance of it, I ſhall handle it both in a Doctrinal and in an Applicatory way. For,

1. I ſhall fully Prove it to you, not only by the Apoſtles, but alſo by ſome other Arguments, that we muſt not do any manner of Wrong to others, nor in any thing deal Injuriouſly with them. And then,

2. I ſhall bring this Duty yet farther home to you by ſome cloſe words of Application.

1. I ſhall clearly and fully prove it to you, not only by the Apoſtles, but alſo by ſome other Arguments, that we muſt not do any manner of Wrong to others, nor in any thing deal injuriouſly with them. And,

1. We muſt not do this, Becauſe that Nature it ſelf teaches us not to do any Injury or Wrong to others. We are not born Wild and Savage Creatures, and Beaſts of Prey: We have not naturally

rally a Diſpoſition in us to bite, and tear, and devour one another: The State of our Nature is not a State of Rapine and Violence, Cheating and over-reaching are not any of the Principles of it; as a late Monſter of Men and Shame of Mankind, the great *Leviathan* of Atheiſm, that vile Aſperſer and Slanderer of our Humane Nature, hath ſcurrilouſly aſſerted in his Works, to make way for ſome other of his wretched and forlorn Principles: But on the contrary, our Nature would lead us to all kind of fair and juſt and honeſt Dealings with one another, if we our ſelves did not ſtifle the Dictates, and ſuppreſs the Inclinations of it: Whatſoever the forementioned Traducer of our Nature, or any of his Diſciples may or can ſay to the contrary, we are not left at Liberty by the Principles of our Nature to do what hurt and Miſchief we can to one another; but there are natural Principles of Honeſty written in legible Characters upon all our Hearts, that would check, and curb, and reſtrain us from doing wrong, if we were not continually razing them out of our Hearts, by giving way to Pride, and Ambition, and Luſt, and Worldly-mindedneſs; We muſt wink hard, and be wilfully blind,

blinder.

blinder than ever the Heathens themſelves could be, if we cannot find a Law of Nature within us, that plainly Inſtructs us in this Duty of not wronging others, and ſtrongly Prompts us to the Performance of it. For this Doctrine of doing no Injury or harm to others, is a Doctrine that was alwayes Currant, not only at *Jeruſalem* but at *Athens* too; not only in the Church of God, but alſo in the *Gentile* World: This is a Leſſon that was taught not only in the Schools of the Prophers, but in the Schools of the Philoſophers alſo; a Leſſon that we may learn not only out of the Word of God, but likewiſe out of the Writings of Heathen men; for many of the Heathens themſelves, who had only the Light and the Law of Nature for their Guide, have ſpoken very excellent things of this Duty of not wronging others, and have been very ſerious and earneſt in preſſing the Performance of it, as might eaſily and abundantly be ſhewed to you out of their Writings: Nay, theſe Gentiles who were meer Strangers to the Grace of God and his written Word, who had nothing elſe but the Dictates of their Nature, and the Principles of their Reaſon, and their In-bred Notions of good and evil to go by,

were

were so far from allowing the doing of any injury to one another, that they had amongst them very severe Laws against *Rapine* and *Violence*, against *Theft* and *Coveting*, against *Fraud* and *Deceit*, and against all manner of injurious and dishonest Dealings, and were also very strict and punctual in the Execution of those Laws. And therefore we are obliged not to wrong others for this reason, because the wronging of them is a plain violation and breach of that very *Law* of *Nature* which is written upon all our Hearts, and such a *Sin* as the *Heathens* themselves, who were any ways careful to follow the *Dictates* of their *Nature*, were quite ashamed to be guilty of. And let us Christians have a care, and look to it, that the Heathens do not rise up in judgement against us in this matter at the last Day, and then in the face and hearing of all the World confound and condemn us in it. But then,

Secondly, We must not do any manner of wrong to others, nor in any thing deal in-

injuriously with them, because that this is a thing that is not only taught us by the *Law of Nature*, but is expresly required of us also by the Word of God. The Will of God in this matter is sufficiently revealed to us in the Scriptures, and his Commands both in the *Old* and in the *New Testament* are very full and frequent to this purpose, that we must not imagine mischief in our *Hearts* against others, nor do them any wrong, nor injure them at all. The Law of *Moses* is plain to this purpose, as plain as words can make it, *Levit.* 19. 13. *Thou shalt not Defraud thy Neighbour*; and again in the Thirty fifth Verse of that Chapter, *Ye shall do no unrighteousness in Judgment, in Mete-yard, in Weight, or in Measure*, that is, Ye shall not allow of any manner of falshood and wrong amongst you, nor give way to any kind of Fraud and Deceit whatsoever in any of your Dealings and concerns with one another.

And perhaps this *Duty* of not wronging others was dearly signified to the *Jews*

under the *Law*, by the very Nature and Temper of those *Living Creatures* which they were to offer in *Sacrifice*? For none of the Birds of the Air, or Beasts of the Field were chosen and appointed by God for Sacrifice, but such as were harmless and inoffensive, and of a mild Temper, and of a gentle and good Nature and Condition: And the appointment of such only for Sacrifice might be to teach the Jews, that they ought to be *Tender-hearted*, *Loving*, and *Gentle* towards one another, and to live in all peaceableness together, and to do no hurt, or injury, or wrong to one another.

And then as for the Prophets, they are very full and express in enjoyning this *Duty* of not doing any wrong, and it would be endless to instance in places out of them to this purpose, for they do all with open and with one Mouth exclaim and inveigh against the Jews for those injurious practices and unrighteous Dealings which they were given to, and call aloud upon them to lay aside their unjust and fraudulent courses,

and to live uprightly, and deal honestly with one another. *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets*, says our Saviour, *Matth.* 7. 12. that is, this is the very summ and substance of that which the *Writers* of the *Old Testament* have taught us concerning our *Duty* to one another, that we should carefully observe amongst us that great Natural Rule of Equity, *To do as we would be done to*; that as we would not that others should do any injury to us, so neither should we do any wrong to them. And this *Duty* of not wronging others is very much improved in the New Testament, and our Saviour hath there advanced it to an higher pitch than it was before; for he is there so far from giving us leave to do the least wrong to others, that he hath strictly commanded us to be kind to our very enemies, and to do good to those very Persons that hate us and deal evilly with us, and to suffer the greatest injuries from others, rather than to do the least harm to them: And we may observe that

that moſt of the Precepts delivered by him in his famous Sermon upon the Mount, are ſuch as put us upon a ſevere honeſt courſe of Life, and leave no room at all for any kind of crooked and deceitful dealings amongſt us. So that now under the Goſpel it is more eſpecially our *Duty* to be of an innocent and harmleſs converſation, to live without Guile and Deceit in the World, and to keep our Hands pure and clear from violence and wrong, and from all manner of unjuſt dealing. The ancient Chriſtians that lived in the firſt Ages of the Church, though themſelves ſtrictly obliged by the Doctrine of Chriſt to do ſo, as plainly appears by that well known and that often cited account which *Pliny* gave of them in a Letter to *Trajan* the Emperour, when he had begun a Perſecution againſt them; for in his Letter to that Heathen Emperour he tells him, that all that could be proved againſt his Chriſtians was only this, that they uſed at ſet times to meet together early in the Morning before day to Worſhip Chriſt; and that they did then bind themſelves not to Rob, or

Steal

Steal, or commit Adultery; not to break their Word, or falsifie their Trust, or the like. Thus honest had these former Christians their conversation amongst the *Gentiles*; thus harmlesly and inoffensively did they behave themselves in the World; and thus carefully were they to abstain from the very appearance of doing any wrong; so that the Heathens themselves, who watched for their halting, could find no other fault with them, nor charge any other crime upon them, but only this, that they were Christians. And though the Christians of our dates, to their shame be it spoken, are in their temper and their carriage very unlike to these Christians of old, yet the Doctrine of Christ in this matter is still the same, and doth as strictly require us to forbear the doing of any wrong, as ever it did them. But farther yet;

Thirdly, We must not do any manner of wrong to others, nor in any thing deal injuriously with them, because that it is required of us that we should love them. The loving of one another is the Royal Law of Christ, and that which is peculiarly his Command-

mandment. It is indeed an old Commandment, as old as the Law of *Moſes*, nay, as old as the Law of Nature it ſelf, for long before *Moſes* made it Written Law, God himſelf had made it a branch of the Law of Nature within us. But our Saviour hath now ſo fully inſtructed us in it, and in ſuch a ſpecial and particular manner obliged us to the performance of it, that he calls it his *New Commandment*. And indeed this *Commandment* of loving our Brethren he doth every where in the Gospel ſo ſtrictly enjoyn us, ſo earneſtly recommend to us, and ſo vehemently preſs upon us, as if he almoſt required nothing elſe of us in comparison of this. And if it is thus ſtrictly and indiſpenſably required of us that we ſhould love others, then to be ſure we muſt not any waies wrong them, or be injurious to them: for how can the doing of any wrong to them be any waies conſiſtent with our loving of them? This would certainly be but a very croſs and untoward way of ſhewing that kindneſs and affection to others, that Chriſt hath Commanded us to have for them. But farther yet than this:

Fourthly,

Fourthly, We must not do any manner of wrong to others, nor in any thing deal injuriously with them; Because that it is not only required of us that we should love others, but also that we should love them as our selves. Indeed that known Precept, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, respects rather the quality than the quantity of our Love towards others, and doth not command a parity but a likeness of it; for we are not bound to Love others equally, or so much as our selves, but with the like manner and kind of Love, that we do our selves. Our Love then to others, like the Love to our selves, must not be false, and feigned, and hypocritical; but true and real, and without all manner of dissimulation. Now if we are commanded to proceed so far in our kindness, and good will, and affections towards others, as to Love them as truly and sincerely as we do our selves, then it is past all doubt that we must not do any manner of wrong to them; for there are none of us that Love our selves so little, as to be willing that any kind of hurt or injury should be done to us. But now,

Fifthly,

5. To make use of the Apostle's dreadfull Argument, to Enforce this Duty, and set it fully home upon you: We must not do any manner of Wrong to others, nor in any Matter whatsoever deal Injuriously with them; Because that the Lord will be the *Avenger of all such.* There is not one of all those that do so, that shall escape the Vengeance of God, and go away unpunished; For the God that is above them, doth narrowly observe all the Fraudulent Courses which they take, and all the Injurious Practises which they use to the hurt of Others, and will in due time call them to a very strick and severe Account for them, and fully pay them that, which they have Deserved.

They that break through all the Bounds of Equity and Justice to go beyond and over-reach their Neighbours, that use any subtile Arts and Devices to defraud their Brethren of their Possessions, and endeavour to encrease thier own Substance, by the Spoil which they make of other men,

are ſuch Tranſgreſſors as God is highly Diſpleaſed with, and doth uſually ſooner or later Plague even here in this World, as well as in the World to come. Sometimes he ſends his ſecret Curſe into their Houſes, which there ſticks faſt by them and like a Canker eats into their Eſtates and waſtes away their Goods, and by degrees devours and conſumes all that they have. And ſometimes he cauſes the Hand of Publick Juſtice to find them out, and to pluck the Spoil out of their Teeth, and to gripe them, and handle them roughly, and make them Vomit up thoſe forbidden Morſels, thoſe Morſels of Violence and Deceit, which they had ſo glibly devoured.

And ſometimes, nay oftentimes indeed, he takes the Matter more openly into his own Hand, and puniſhes them in an extraordinary manner, and in ſome ſignal way doth Execution upon them, when they think themſelves ſafe from fear, and far enough from danger.

How

How ſecure did *Ahab* and *Jezebel*, that wretched Pair of Wrong-doers, think themſelves, when they had over-reached *Naboth*, and defrauded him of his Vineyard in a Court of Judicature, and under a Form of Juſtice, and with a ſhew of a Legal Proceeding againſt him?

Having this way gotten from him the Ancient Inheritance of his Father, they thought themſelves ſafe enough in the poſſeſſion of it, and free from any Harm that might follow. But a time of Recompence, and the Day of *the Lord's Vengeance came upon them at laſt*, and that with a *Witneſs too*, in a very Remarkable Way and Manner; for, as the Prophet *Elijah* had foretold, in the place where the Dogs licked the Blood of *Naboth*, there they alſo licked the Blood of *Ahab*; and there they not onely licked the Blood of *Jezebel*, but there they eat her up too, and left nothing of her Carcaſe remaining, but her Skull and her Feet, and the Palms of her Hands. And it is farther obſervable, that the evil which befell their Son King *Joram*, did over-take and ſeize

upon him in the Portion of *Naboth* the *Jezreelite*; for there *Jehu* met him in his furious march against him, and there he ſmote him thorow the Heart with an Arrow, and killed him; and there he commanded his Body to be pulled down out of the Chariot, and caſt upon the open ground; ſo that he lay weltring in his own blood in that very plat of ground, which his Parents had defrauded *Naboth* of, and got unjuſtly from him. And indeed it is uſual with God, as the Hiſtories of all Ages will inform us, to puniſh thoſe that wrong others even in this World, either in their own perſons, or in their Poſterity, or in both, and that in ſome ſtrange and fearfull manner too: Nay, ſo ſtrangely is God provoked to Anger by this ſin of Wronging Others, and ſo ſevere is he againſt it, that he many times plagues a Community, and puniſhes a whole Land and Nation for it; for we cannot read the Prophets with any heed and obſervation at all, but we muſt needs take notice that this is frequently mentioned by moſt of them, as one of

the main Sins and great Abominations for which God delivered up the *Jews* into their Enemies hands, The *Jews*, as we find up and down in the Prophets, were ſtrangely bent upon Violence and Wrong; their Houſes were full of deceit, and they were continually ſetting Traps, and laying Snares for their Brethren, and deviſing how they might over-reach and defraud one another; and for theſe ſins eſpecially it was, that the Wrath and Vengeance of God fell ſo heavy upon them: For it is very obſervable, that no ſins are ſo much inſiſted upon by the Prophets, as theſe, to be the Cauſe of their Deſolation, and of thoſe great and terrible Judgments that came upon them. Nay, it is yet farther obſervable, that in the Seventh Chapter of *Zachariah*, *Injuſtice*, and *Oppreſſion*, and *Wrong-dealing* are the onely ſins that are mentioned, for which God ſent them away into Captivity, and laid their Land deſolate and waſte: for the Prophet there tells them, that becauſe they refuſed to execute true Judgment, and would not ſhew Mercy and Compaſſion to their Brethren,

thren, but went on ſtill to oppreſs the Widow, and the Fatherleſs, and the Stranger, and the Poor, and to imagine evil in their Hearts againſt their Brethren; therefore there came a great Wrath from the Lord of Hoſts: For theſe ſins ſuch a ſtorm of his Anger fell upon them, as ſcattered them with a Whirl-wind among all the Nations *whom they knew not*. But if thoſe that wrong others, and deal injuriouſly with them, ſhould eſcape the Vengeance of God in this World, and go down into their Graves, without having any remarkable Puniſhment inflicted upon them here; yet ſhall they not for all this always go unpuniſhed; for the Wrath and Vengeance of God will purſue them into the other World, and there finally overtake them, and come upon them to the uttermoſt, and their latter end will be, that they ſhall periſh for ever. Tho theſe men may here by their wit or their Wealth, by thir power or their Friends, or by any other means eſcape the Judgment of Man, yet ſhall they not hereafter by all the Arts that they can uſe, eſcape the righteous

Judg-

Judgment of God: for God hath appointed a Day, wherein he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs; and when that Day of recompences is come, he will then render to every man according to his Deeds: to thoſe that have done juſtly, and have been righteous in all their waies, and upright in all their Dealings, he will render Glory, and Honor, and Peace, and Immortality, and eternal Life: But to thoſe that have done wrong, and been unjuſt; to *Oppreſſors* and *Deceivers*; to the men that have been *Injurious* to their *Brethren*, and *Inventers* and *Practiſers* of evil things againſt them; *He* will render *Indignation* and *Wrath*, *Tribulation* and *Anguiſh* upon every *Soul* of them. *They* that have done *Wrong*, howſoever they may *eſcape here*, ſhall *then* receive in *full meaſure* for the wrong which they *have done*; their *violent Dealing* ſhall then fall down upon their own *Heads* in *Eternal Showers* of Vengeance, and *God* will for ever pay them home for all their *Villanies* and *Miſchiefs* which they have been guilty of. He will then make his whole *Diſpleaſure* to ariſe againſt them, and will *caſt* the *fury* of his *wrath* upon them, and

puniſh

punish them with everlasting death and destruction from His Presence, and be *alwaies terrible* in his doings towards them. He will then turn them into *Hell*, that frightful place of *torments*, where they must alwaies have their *Habitation* amongst *Devils* and *damned Spirits*, and *dwell* with devouring *Flames*, and suffer the Vengeance of *Eternal Fire*, and for ever endure the heaviest Plagues and punishments, that the vindicative *Justice* of an angry and incensed God can heap upon them.

And so I have done with the *First* thing; and I think have sufficiently proved it to you by the Apostles, and by some other Arguments, that we must not do any manner of wrong to others, nor in any matter whatsoever deal injuriously with them. And now

2. I shall bring this Duty yet farther home to you by some close words of *Application*. And that this may be the better done,

1. Let

1. Let us ſuffer a few words of Rebuke, and be perſwaded to hear a little, how very careleſs and negligent moſt of us are in the performance of this Duty. And then,

2. Let us alſo ſuffer ſome words of Exhortation, and be perſwaded for the time to come, to be more ſtrict and careful in the Performance of this Duty, than hitherto we have been.

1. Let us ſuffer a few words of Rebuke, and be perſwaded to hear a little how extreamly careleſs and negligent moſt of us are in the Performance of this Duty. Though this Doctrine of not wronging others, is very clear and evident, both from Reaſon and Scripture, and a Doctrine that cannot be gainſaid, yet it is not received and entertained amongſt us, as it ought to be; for who is there that believes our report in this matter, that hath any regard to what we ſay in this thing? or that follows the Advice and Counſel that we give them in it? who are the Perſons, and where are they now almoſt to be found, that behave themſelves aright in this caſe, and are as careful as they ought to be, not to go beyond and defraud their Brethren? Are not the Hearts of moſt Men fully ſet in them to do Evil to one another? Do not their inward

Thoughts altogether run after Mischief? And are they not continually plotting how they may compass their villanous Designs, and bring about those pernitious Devices which they have devised to the hurt of others? do not the generality of Men amongst us make account that their Wits are their own, and that they may use them as they please for their own Interest and Advantage here? Do not they think that they may be as wise in their Generation, and as crafty as possibly they can, for their worldly Gains, and that to inrich themselves, they may over-reach their Brethren in any of their Dealings and Concerns with them? And may not we make the same complaint of our Age, as *Petrarch* somewhere doth of the Age wherein he lived; That Hunters and Fowlers cannot use greater cunning in laying their Nets and Snares for wild Beasts and Fowls, than we do in setting Traps for one another? For what mysteries of cheating and cozenage have Men now-a-days got amongst them? What Arts and Stratagems do they use to inveigle and ensnare those that are unwary, and make a Prey of them? And how skilfull are they grown at all the ways of circumventing and over-reaching their Brethren? How subtile

and politick are they in their fraudulent, and deceitful Courſes? What cunning Feteches and Devices have they to wrong their Neighbours, and do them Harm? And how many Wiles and Inventions have they found out to work this their Iniquity by? So many indeed, that if I ſhould declare and ſpeak of them, they would be more than I ſhould be able to expreſs: Nay, it might juſtly bring a Man's Honeſty into ſuſpicion to have the Skill, and be able to reckon them up. And therefore in a word; how buſy and active are the Men of this Generation in invading the Rights of their Neighbours, and injuring them in their Goods and Poſſeſſions? How greedy are they to inrich themſelves by Fraud and Deceit, and to enlarge their Eſtates, though it be by unjuſt Gain, and the Spoil of others? And how ready are they to take every Advantage that they can over their Brethren, and to bring any kind of hurt, and damage upon them, if by ſo doing they may any ways profit themſelves? But now,

2. Let us ſuffer ſome words of Exhortation alſo, and be perſwaded for the time to come to be more ſtrict and preciſe, more exact and punctual in the performance of this Duty, than

hitherto we have been. Let us not hereafter any ways wrong our Brethren, nor defraud them in any matter, nor in any reſpect whatſoever do them the leaſt hurt; but let us walk honeſtly amongſt them, and in all things deal well and truly with them, and in no kind be injurious to them. Let us conſider what Obligations we have upon us not to wrong others: Let us conſider, that the Law of Nature it ſelf, that very Law that is written upon all our Hearts, teaches us not to do others any wrong: Let us conſider alſo, that the Laws of God are very full and expreſs to the ſame purpoſe, and that the Old and the New Teſtament do abound with Precepts of this nature, that we muſt not harm others, nor imagine Miſchief in our Hearts againſt them, nor take any thing from them that doth of right belong to them. Nay, let us conſider, that the Commands of God do carry the buſineſs ſomewhat higher, and oblige us to love others, and to love them, though not in the ſame degree, yet with the ſame Truth and Sincerity of Love, that we do our ſelves, and to endeavour their good, as we would our own. And let us not break theſe Bonds aſunder, nor caſt away theſe Cords from us, nor ſin againſt

againſt theſe Obligations which Nature, and the God of Nature hath laid upon us, not to be injurious and hurtful to others. But if theſe things will not ſignify any thing with us, as perhaps with many of us they may not; then let us conſider farther, how very great the danger is that we run, in doing wrong to others. Let us bethink our ſelves, that if we do injure and oppreſs, and defraud our Brethren, it is very likely that the Wrath of God will break out againſt us in this World, and that we ſhall be ſoundly puniſhed for it here; but to be ſure, we ſhall ſmart ſeverely for it hereafter: for then God will at laſt come in flaming Fire to take Vengeance on us, and will condemn us to the Puniſhments of the other World, to thoſe dreadful Pains and Torments there that will laſt to eternal Ages, and never have an end. And let theſe Terrors of the Lord ſcare us out of all our unrighteous Practices, and fright us from all manner of Fraud and Injuſtice in our Dealings with one another. Before we venture upon the wronging of our Brethren, let us conſider it well in our minds, whether we can bear up and ſupport our ſelves under the Vengeance of God that will follow. Is our Damnation a thing that we can lightly paſs over, and make

make no great matter of? Can we withstand the Power of God's Wrath, when he shall accomplish all his Anger upon us? Can we for ever bear up under the weight of his Indignation, and without any anguish of Mind lie under the strokes of his eternal Vengeance and Fury? Can our Hands be strong in the day that an avenging God shall deal with us in his Justice, and let all his Terrors in array against us? Can our Hearts endure when he shall come in flaming Fire to take Vengeance on us, and turn us into Hell for the wrong that we have done? Can we then with any Comfort dwell in the midst of devouring Flames and everlasting Burnings? Can we then suffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire, without shrinking or being daunted at it? Can we then take any Contentment in the company of cursed Angels, and damned Spirits? And can we then chear up our selves against the horror and remorse of our own guilty Consciences, and with Patience indure the Stings and Bitings of that Worm that never dies? If we cannot do these things, as to be sure we cannot, then what desperate Folly and Madness will it be for us to run into the commission of that Sin, which will most certainly be avenged upon us by such dismal Punishments as these are.

Surely,

Surely, if we would sometimes consider how terrible God will be in his dealings with all injurious Persons, and how dreadful the Works of his Vengeance will for ever be upon them, we durst not defraud our Brethren, and do them Wrong so commonly as now we do.

Would any dare to turn aside the needy from Judgment, and take away the Right from the Poor, and make Widows their Prey, and rob the Fatherless, if they did but consider with themselves, that a Father of the Fatherless, and a Judg of the Widows is God in his holy Habitation; and that from thence he sees the Oppression of the Poor, and hears the sighing of the Needy, and will at length arise for their defence, and maintain their righteous Cause, and plague all those that have harmed them wrongfully, and dealt injuriously with them?

Would Men covet Fields, and take them by violence; and Houses, and take them away: and so oppress a Man and his House, even a Man and his Heritage? Could they be so very busy and industrious as they are in invading the Rights of others, in defrauding the Brethren of their Goods, and injuring them in their Possessions; if they did but once take it into their Thoughts,

that

that they must be called to a strict account for these things before the righteous Judg of all the World, who loves Justice and Judgment, and will be sure to punish the wrong-doer, and break in pieces the Oppressor, and spoil the Soul of all those that have spoiled others?

How durst the subtile and the cunning Sinners hold fast Deceit, and go on in their fraudulent and mischievous Courses? How durst they deal so treacherously, and endeavour by their circumventing Skill to go beyond and over-reach their Neighbours, if they did but call to mind, that God sees all their Fetches and their Devices, all their lesser and greater Mysteries of Iniquity, and will at last bring them into Judgment for all those wicked Arts and Stratagems, which they have so often made use of to ensnare the ignorant and unwary, and make them fall a Prey into their Nets?

Would Men covet an evil Covetousness to their Houses, that they might set their Nests on high? Would they go to raise their Families by that which they wrongfully take from others, if they considered that thir ill-gotten Wealth will

bring

bring ſuch a Curſe of God along with it into their Houſes, as will root out all their Increaſe, and quickly be the ruine and Deſtruction of them and their Poſterity? Would they dare to ſuffer any unjuſt Gain to cleave to their Fingers? would they not preſently with all the haſte imaginable, ſhake their Hands from holding of it, if they conſidered further, that the heaping up of this is but the laying up of Vengeance in Store, and the Treaſuring up of Wrath for themſelves againſt the great Day of Wrath?

Would men be tampering in the very Courts of Juſtice, and be deviſing Subtilties there how they may Circumvent their Brethren, and thruſt them out of their apparent Rights, if they conſidered that they muſt in another Court of Juſtice, and at Gods own Tribunal, give an Account of this, and there have the Sentence of Eternal Condemnation Paſſed upon them for it?

Would any Perſons have the boldneſs to be Givers or Takers of Bribes to Afflict the Innocent, if they conſidered that a God of Infinite Juſtice looks upon them, when their Hands are either opened to Receive, or Stretched out to give the Wages of Unrighteouſneſs, and that he will be an Avenger of all thoſe that uſe ſuch foul and Indirect Practices againſt their Brethren?

With what Confidence could any men talk

deceitfully, and ſpeak in any matter to *wreſt Judgment* and *pervert Equity*, if they did but bethink themſelves that the God of Faithfulneſs and Truth knowes every word that is in their Mouths, and that he utterly abhorrs all thoſe that love Lying rather than to ſpeak Righteouſneſs, and will at laſt Condemn them to thoſe eternal Flames, where they ſhall never be allowed one drop of Water to cool their falſe Tongues, which have framed Deceit? *What ſhall be given unto thee? or what ſhall be done unto thee, thou falſe Tongue?* It is *David's* Queſtion, *Pſal.* 120. 3. And his Anſwer to it in the next Verſe is very dreadful: *Sharp Arrows of the Mighty, with coals of Juniper*: That is, as ſome of the *Jewiſh* Interpreters expound it, piercing Plagues here, and Hell fire hereafter: This ſhall be the Portion of thoſe men whoſe Tongues *deviſe Miſchief*, and who love *all Devouring words* that will do hurt.

What fearfulneſs and trembling would ſeize upon the falſe Swearers, what an horrible dread would preſently overwhelm them, if they did but call to their remembrance that the juſt Lord hath taken notice of all their Perjuries, of all thoſe Oaths which they have Sworn falſely by his Name, to the hurt and Prejudice of others? And that he will not hold them Guiltleſs, nor ſuffer

ſuffer them to go Unpuniſhed for theſe hainous Crimes, but will moſt certainly let looſe the fierceneſs of his Anger and Diſpleaſure upon them, and purſue them with Wrath and Vengeance all their dayes here, and throughout all the dayes of Eternity hereafter?

And as for the high and mighty Tranſgreſſors, the haughty and imperious Sinners, that have no regard at all either to the Laws of God or Man in this caſe, but do their Brethren hurt with as great a Confidence as others do them good; how would their Courage ſink, and their hearts fail them, if they would but take it into their Conſideration, that there is a great God above them to whom they muſt be accountable for all the Hurt and Miſchief they have done, and that he will be no Reſpecter of their Perſons in Judgment, nor Spare them any more than the meaneſt Sinners in the day of his Wrath?

And to draw to a Concluſion, for I think it is time ſo to do; Let us all be perſwaded very frequently and ſeriouſly to conſider what this terrible place and Text of Scripture puts us in mind of, That the Lord will be a ſure and ſevere Avenger of all ſuch as *go beyond* and *Defraud their Brethren* in any matter; and let the fear of his Eternal Vengeance keep us

within the strictest Rules of Equity and Justice, and refrain us from doing the least Injury or wrong to others. That we may escape that dreadful Wrath of his that is to come, let us forsake all our over-reaching, and fraudulent and deceitful Courses; and let us do justly, and live honestly, and neither devise nor practise any harm against our Brethren; and then when God comes to Judge the World, he will not be an *Avenger*, but a *Rewarder* of us: then we may all with Chearfulness and Comfort stand before his Judgment Seat at the last and final Judgment of all the World; for then the Judge of all the World will pass a joyful Sentence upon us, and before that great and most solemn Assembly, that ever appeared before, all the Angels and all the Devils, and before all the Good and all the Bad men of all Generations, will Pronounce us *Blessed* for evermore. And God grant that we may all be so Just to one another now, that the Lord may be Merciful to us all at that Day, and Receive us up into his Heavenly Kingdom, to be Partakers of all the Joys of it, and there to make our Eternal abode in his most glorious and delightful Presence. *Amen.*